

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY HELD ON THURSDAY 29 JANUARY 2009 AT 09.30 HOURS IN THE THEATRE, WATERSIDE SPORTS AND SOCIAL CLUB, HOLBURY

Present:

Members

Barry Rickman (Deputy Chairman) (in the Chair)

Peter Frost	Clive Maton
Tony Gentle	Bob Morris
Roger Heape	Alan Rice
Maureen Holding	John Sanger
Ted Johnson	Stan Wade
Mel Kendal	

Officers

Lindsay Cornish	Chief Executive
Kevin Gardner	Monitoring Officer
Martin O'Neill	Director of Information and Visitor Services
Steve Trotter	Director of Conservation, Recreation and Sustainable Development
Paula Freeland	Head of Environmental Services
Nigel Matthews	Head of Visitor and Recreation Services
David Stone	Head of Member Services
Sarah Applegate	Senior Planner
Bryan Wilson	Senior Tree Officer
Rosalind Alderman	Member Services Officer
Jo Murphy	Member Services Administrator

Also in attendance:

Kevin Stubbs, Consultant

PART I – OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

49. Apologies for absence

49.1 Apologies for absence were received from Clive Chatters, Kathy Heron, Julian Johnson, Vicky Myers, Leo Randall, Alan Weeks and Pat Wyeth.

50. Declarations of interest

50.1 On advice from the Monitoring Officer, Local Authority members accepted and declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in agenda items which related to their role as County, District or Parish members. Members of Hampshire County Council would have a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute item 57 (Climate Change Update) and minute item 58 (Ranger Services in the New Forest National Park).

50.2 The Monitoring Officer also advised that any member who owned (or a member of whose family or a close personal associate of whom owned) land within the proposed boundaries of the Beaulieu, Buckler's Hard or Exbury conservation areas, and the financial value of that land was likely to be affected by the proposals, would have a personal and prejudicial interest in minute item 56

(Conservation Areas Review – Beaulieu, Buckler’s Hard and Exbury). No declarations of interest were made in connection with this report.

51. Chairman’s announcements

51.1 The Chairman had no announcements on this occasion.

52. Minutes of meeting on 11 December 2008

52.1 The minutes of the meeting on 11 December 2008 were agreed as a true record.

53. Public Question Time

53.1 Sue Baillie, speaking for ‘One Voice’, asked how the decision had been made not to grant ‘public’ meetings on the National Park Plan and Recreation Management Strategy, as requested in her statement to the Authority on 16 October 2008; she asked members to hold a full discussion and cast a vote on this subject under minute item 60 (Urgent Business). She also asked what arrangements the Authority had made for discussions with the general public in the next stage of the process and how it would inform the public of these arrangements. Mrs Baillie requested that the Authority’s website page entitled ‘New Forest National Park Authority forthcoming public meetings’ be amended to include reference to the Authority’s public speaking procedures; or to remove the word ‘public’ from the title.

53.2 Referring to the first two points, the Deputy Chairman responded that the question of public engagement on the Park Plan had been considered by the Chairman following the presentment made in October. In the light of discussions with officers and the circumstances prevailing at the time, the decision was taken for largely practical reasons to maximise officer and member involvement through the remaining schedule of parish council meetings rather than organise public meetings. These meetings were well publicised and provided a useful forum for dialogue with the public and an opportunity to clarify some of the proposals.

53.3 Setting out the next steps, the Deputy Chairman advised that officers aimed to issue invitations to attend a series of working groups which were being set up to consider six key topics that had arisen during the consultation. They were also close to finalising their advice on other types of engagement, not only with statutory organisations, ward councillors and parishes but also on public engagement.

53.4 On the third point, he undertook to review this matter with officers. He said that the public needed to know that meetings were open to the public, to listen and participate. He pointed out that the procedures for speaking were set out on the website and published on the Authority’s agendas five clear days before a meeting to provide an opportunity for people to consider any relevant reports and lodge a request to speak if they so wished.

53.5 David Dickenson, New Forest Dog Owners’ Group, made a presentment to members on responses to the National Park Plan consultation, asking that NFDog responses be placed in the analysis for both the National Park Plan and the Recreation Management Strategy. He felt that the analysis of responses that had been produced so far was misleading and did not adequately reflect the high volume of responses that had been received.

53.6 The Deputy Chairman assured Mr Dickenson that the Authority was fully aware of the strength of NFDog’s opposition to certain policies in the Recreation

Management Strategy. Lindsay Cornish advised that it would be inappropriate to respond to the detailed exchanges referred to by Mr Dickenson on the statistics on the consultation responses, which would be dealt with through outstanding correspondence. She advised that the final report back to the Authority after the review process of the Park Plan and policies would include a full statistical breakdown of the responses and how they have been addressed in the review.

- 53.7 In response to a further query from Mr Dickenson on the timescale for when the above statistics would be available to the public, Lindsay Cornish advised that this would be when the full report on the consultation was presented to the Authority, alongside the revised Park Plan, currently planned for May 2009. However, this date might need to be reviewed depending on the progress of the review and that of the working groups to which NFD OG would be invited to participate.

54. Chief Executive's Report

- 54.1 Lindsay Cornish introduced the report (NFNPA 282/09), noting that the list of members' recent commitments on page 3 of the report should be amended to include a reference to the Sustainable Development Fund Panel meeting that had taken place on 7 January 2009.

- 54.2 Members made the following comments:

- (a) Referring to the joint signage site visits made with Hampshire Highways' consultants mentioned under Landscape (C1) on page 4 of the report, it was suggested that similar activities be undertaken with Wiltshire Council to attempt to improve and standardise transport matters. One member commented on local dissatisfaction with Hampshire Highways' new signage and the vandalism of new signs, and asked that discussions be taken forward with New Forest District Council, Hampshire County Council and the Parish Councils to improve matters.
- (b) Referring to the 'Aren't Birds Brilliant' project described under 'Partnership working' on page 8 of the report, one member felt that the new Forest Centre in Lyndhurst would be a more appropriate venue, owing to the risk of harm to the ancient woodlands around the Reptile Centre from increased traffic. Nigel Matthews, Head of Visitor Services, explained that the RSPB had been in favour of the site because it was generally more successful to encourage the public to engage with nature in a more natural environment but agreed to check records on numbers visiting the Centre.
- (c) In response to a query, Steve Trotter gave more detail on the seminar referred to at page 4 of the report under 'Nature Conservation (C3)', which had included a presentation on the jointly funded project with Footprint Ecology to analyse the impacts of housing growth and the potential increase of visitor usage on special areas of conservation; the authorities involved in the seminar had considered various options to mitigate these pressures and provide better 'green infrastructure'. Officers also expanded on the meeting of the Statutory Body Liaison Group, referred to at page 9 of the report, which had been set up to look at initial responses on the National Park Plan and to identify individuals within these organisations with whom the Authority could liaise as it took the Plan process forward.
- (d) Officers were also asked to give feedback on the discussions with Hampshire County Council about future liaison arrangements on transport and traffic issues and specifically the funding implications of the New Forest

Transport Officer post and the work that remained to be done. Lindsay Cornish responded that the review was yet to be completed, but potentially the work that had been carried out by the jointly funded post could be completed by the Authority's own Transport Officer, which would release approximately £16,000 of funds.

- (e) The Chairman reminded members that if they had specific questions arising from the report they could take these up with the Chief Executive before the meeting.

54.3 Members then noted the report.

55. New Forest National Park Authority: Annual Monitoring Report 2008

55.1 Sarah Applegate introduced the report (NFNPA 283/09), which she explained had been submitted to the Government Office for the South East at the end of December 2008 and was now brought to members for information. One member commented that the reporting requirements were onerous and congratulated officers on coping effectively with the workload at a time when the planning policy team was without a key post.

55.2 Members then noted the contents of the 2008 Annual Monitoring Report.

56. Conservation Areas Review: Beaulieu, Buckler's Hard and Exbury

56.1 Paula Freeland introduced the report (NFNPA 284/09), explaining that the review was the second in the series of boundary reviews for the existing conservation areas in the Park that were taking place.

Resolved: That

1. In accordance with the powers contained in Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the revised boundaries of the Beaulieu, Buckler's Hard and Exbury shown on the plans at Annexes 2, 3 and 4 to report NFNPA 284/09 be designated and that notice of the designation be duly given and advertised in accordance with the provisions of Section 70 of the Act; and
2. The character appraisals of Beaulieu, Bucklers Hard and Exbury conservation areas, including illustrations and maps, be adopted and published.

Voting: none voting against

57. Climate Change update

57.1 Steve Trotter introduced the report (NFNPA 285/09), updating members on progress in addressing climate change and explaining that members were recommended to sign the Nottingham Declaration on climate change.

57.2 Members commented that the Nottingham Declaration was consistent with National Park purposes, and that climate change or volatility represented a critical threat to the National Park. Action on climate volatility made sense in any event to address energy resource issues and conservation. One member expressed disappointment that he felt the summary of forthcoming activities set out in Annex 3 to the report did not contain planning development control actions that would assist in achieving Hampshire County Council's objective NI186 (to

mitigate the progress of climate change), referred to at paragraph 5.2 of the report. Officers noted these comments and would review the list of activities. One member asked for a more in-depth presentation and discussion.

- 57.3 Roger Heape congratulated Steve Trotter on the report. He suggested that it would be useful to have a member Champion on climate change and volunteered to act in this capacity.

Resolved: That

1. The report be noted; and
2. The Authority sign the Nottingham Declaration.

Voting: none voting against

58. Ranger Services in the New Forest National Park

- 58.1 Steve Trotter presented the report (NFNPA 286/09), which considered the existing position with regard to ranger services in the National Park. Much of the National Park was covered by rangers from other organisations such as the Forestry Commission, Hampshire County Council and the National Trust. Members were asked to consider whether the Authority's aspirations and needs could be met through the existing arrangements, or whether it would need to develop its own small ranger team.
- 58.2 Members agreed that the work carried out by the Waterside Ranger and the Authority's own part time ranger had been excellent. It would be beneficial to the Authority to seek close contact with local communities in the Park and the work of rangers was one way of achieving this. While generally supporting the approach suggested in principle, some members expressed concerns over the likely cost of developing the Authority's own ranger service. It was noted that a detailed assessment of costs would be put together and scrutinised by the Resources and Performance Committee before a decision was made on developing the Authority's own ranger team. Members pointed out that many of the Forestry Commission's rangers were voluntary and it might be possible for the Authority to follow a similar approach or share the volunteer resource. It was also suggested that the report consider the opportunity to train a number of the Authority's existing staff to allow them to spend a proportion of their time as rangers.
- 58.3 Mel Kendal explained that, although he was broadly in support of the recommendations, he would abstain from the vote owing to his position as the Executive Member for the Environment for Hampshire County Council and the possibility that the provision of ranger services could be agreed with Hampshire County Council under a Service Level Agreement. Alan Rice asked that it be noted that he had voted against the proposals.

Resolved: That

1. The background assessment be noted;
2. The proposal for the Authority to become more directly involved in the coordination and provision of ranger services in the National Park be approved in principle;

- 3. The Director of Conservation, Recreation and Sustainable Development be authorised to develop detailed proposals for a small National Park ranger team, and prepare a paper outlining the resources required for consideration by the Resources and Performance Committee, and subsequent recommendation to the Authority.

Voting: 9-1 (3 abstentions)

59. Report on New Forest Consultative Panel (8 January)

- 59.1 Steve Trotter introduced the report (NFNPA 287/09).

Resolved:

- 1. That issues of interest at the meeting of the New Forest Consultative Panel on 8 January 2009 be noted.
- 2. That the date of the next Panel meeting, being Thursday 5 March 2009, be noted.

Voting: None voting against

60. Urgent Items by the Chairman

- 60.1 The Deputy Chairman advised that there were no matters of urgency that he intended to raise under this item.

The meeting closed at 10:50 hours.

SignedDate:.....
(Chairman)